

# Early Replacement of Old Diesel Commercial Vehicles

10 March 2010

**Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs  
Subcommittee on Improving Air Quality**

*- Early Replacement of Old Diesel Commercial Vehicles -*

**Civic Exchange - 10 March, 2010**

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1. The Environment Bureau's (EB) paper<sup>1</sup> makes clear that commercial diesel vehicles are the principal emitters of roadside pollution, accounting for 88% of RSP emissions and 76% of nitrogen oxides. However it does not outline the purpose for reducing vehicular emissions – which is the threat to public health.
2. Research from California<sup>2</sup> shows that those living within 500 metres of busy and congested roads are the worst affected. Negative health impacts from diesel emissions include asthma and allergies, impaired lung development in children, and more serious illnesses for the elderly. The poor suffer more than other socioeconomic groups, especially from higher cardiovascular and respiratory mortality rates<sup>3</sup>.
3. The proposed scheme for replacement of Euro II vehicles targets just 7,280 out of the 66,000 highly polluting pre-Euro, Euro I and Euro II diesel vehicles currently operating in Hong Kong. This will address just 4% of RSP emissions and 7% of nitrogen oxide emissions from the diesel fleet.
4. It is hard to understand why the 38,000 most polluting vehicles on Hong Kong's Roads – pre-Euro and Euro-I vehicles, that generate 73% of commercial diesel RSP emissions – are not covered by any incentive scheme or control measures. Will the Administration provide further information on:
  - (a) Why the replacement scheme for pre-Euro and Euro I vehicles did not work?
  - (b) What lessons will be incorporated to enhance the Euro II scheme?
  - (c) What will be done about emissions from pre-Euro and Euro I vehicles?
5. It is clear that, at best, an incentive scheme targeting so few vehicles can only marginally reduce diesel emissions, and that it is essential to impose a penalty on those who continue to drive the most polluting vehicles.

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1 Environment Bureau/ Environmental Protection Department. "CB(1)1250/09-10(01) Early Replacement of Old Diesel Commercial Vehicles", 25 February 2008. Sourced on 8 March 2010 from [http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/ea\\_iag/papers/ea\\_iag0310cb1-1250-1-e.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/ea/ea_iag/papers/ea_iag0310cb1-1250-1-e.pdf)

2 W James Gauderman PhD *et al.* "Effect of exposure to traffic on lung development from 10 to 18 years of age: a cohort study", *The Lancet*, Volume 369, Issue 9561, pp. 571-7, 17 February 2007.

3 Wong CM *et al.* "Effects of air pollution on mortality in socially deprived urban areas in Hong Kong, China", *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Volume 116 (9) pp. 1189-94, September 2008.

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6. The EB's request to submit a proposal to increase the licence fees for the most polluting vehicles is a very small first step. Legislators must support this request to implement the "polluter pays" principle and request a proposal for increasing the licence fees. Rejection of EB's proposal is effectively protecting the "right to pollute", which means that the public, especially the poor, will suffer.
7. Furthermore, rejection will likely dissuade the EB from introducing more effective pollution control measures in the future if there is no expectation of support from legislators.
8. In order to enable vehicle operators to plan for progressive upgrades, the EB's proposal should be supported by a clear timeline for implementation, and the fees should be graduated so that the most polluting vehicles pay in proportion to the quantity of emissions over and above the proposed Euro IV standard.

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